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GALLERY IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

## THE MUSEUM AND THE SMALL LIBRARY\*

BY FRANK WEITENKAMPF

CHIEF PRINTS DIVISION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

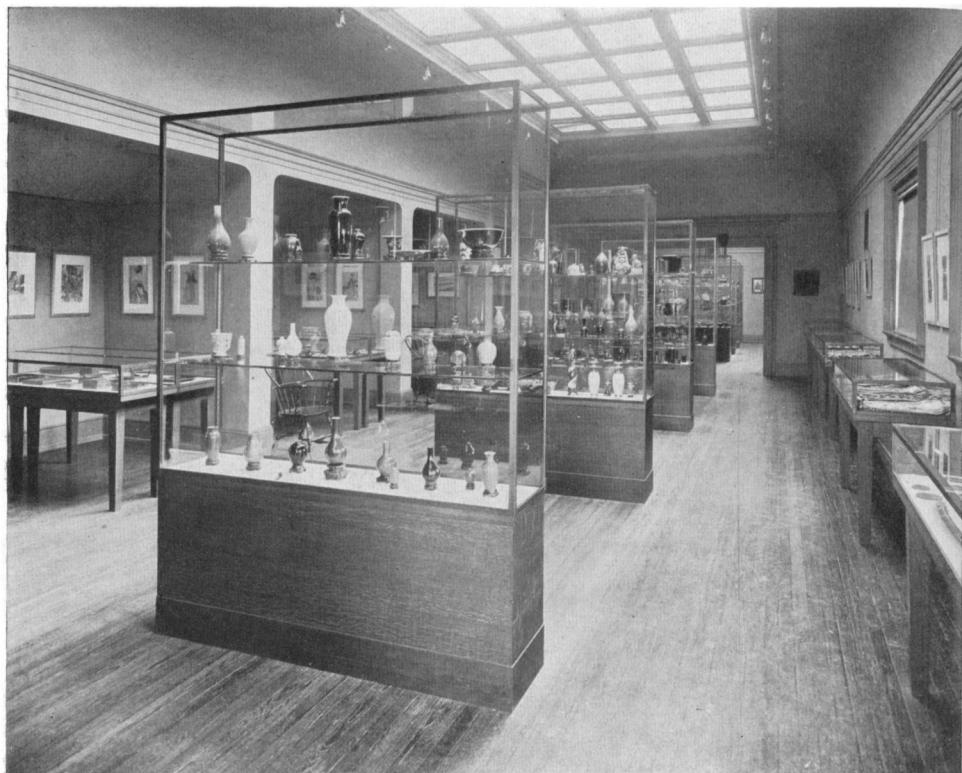
**I**N the largest cities, the possibilities, resources and field covered, inevitably promote specialization. Yet even the branch libraries in such a large city show us what close contact with a smaller circle can accomplish in general effort. Even there the library becomes a center for various undertakings, not all necessarily within its sphere, but all intended to make better instructed, happier and more efficient citizens. In smaller localities the library, as the one public institution serving both old and young, will naturally draw to it material which makes for education by visual means.

But in large towns or small ones, whether there be many agencies or few, whether the museum be connected with

the library or with some other institution, a spirit of helpful, disinterested co-operation will make each promote the interests of the other, to its own profit. The aid of the library should be an important factor. Whether separate from, or connected with, a museum, it can serve, not only the needs of the art student, but also those of the greater general public. And that is obviously the ultimate end of all art training and art propaganda.

There are, of course, two movements in all this. That tending to promote interest in art *per se*, and finding expression in teaching, lecturing, writing and exhibiting in the fields of painting, sculpture and the reproductive graphic arts;

\*A paper read at the Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, held in Washington, D. C., May 15 and 16, 1913.



JAPANESE COLLECTION, NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEWARK, N. J.

and that aiming at a more direct, or at least apparent, connection between art and the daily life, through insistence on the importance of the decorative and applied arts, with a range of possibilities that is of an exceedingly great inclusiveness. The museums which have been included within the scope of Dr. Mather's paper have emphasized both of these objects. For instance, the Fogg Museum at Cambridge, serving as an excellent object lesson for the student of the value of appropriateness as it is exemplified in the exercise of the various arts of the graver and the other media of the maker of prints; and the Cooper Union, with its remarkable activity in the aid of craftsmanship applied to the arts of decoration, furniture, metal work and the other branches serving the decoration of home, grounds and person. The last named institution, like Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, emphasizes also

the fact that the small museum may not only serve the smaller city, as in Norwich or Newark (with its vigorous attempt to bring the citizens to a realization of the applicability of art principles to the day's life), but that it has a most important function in the largest cities as well. With a connection with the school it serves, as direct and close as that of the laboratory with the chemical or physical department of a college it may have most far-reaching results. It seems to me that often the usefulness extracted from such a collection is greater in proportion as its actual size is smaller, as though the contents of the smaller collection were more thoroughly utilized. Of course, in a small museum, too, it is not mere bulk that counts, but careful selection and discriminating display.

From any point from which we consider the question, the connection of the museum, be it large or small, with a

library is always an absolute necessity. The museum may have its own working collection of books or it may be an adjunct of a general or special library. But the presence of printed literature offering the possibility of carrying on studies suggested by the objects exhibited is a *sine qua non*. It is that fact which has inspired the idea that print rooms are a natural department of large libraries. As the late Dr. J. S. Billings said: "A good representative collection of prints is of greatest interest and use to the public in general and to a majority of those especially interested in prints in particular, if it exists in immediate connection with a large library. In the library it can be closely associated with the literature of art, an association which is absolutely necessary to obtain full benefit of each." So we find large collections of prints in the Congressional and New York Public Libraries, and smaller ones at Newark, Springfield (Massachusetts) and elsewhere.

Perhaps, in the smaller town, with a more or less stable public and an equally stable exhibit there may arise that con-

tempt for the familiar which engenders the comfortable feeling that one has nothing more to learn from the object often seen—or rather often passed. Proper and interesting presentation is one safeguard—through arrangement and particularly through proper labels. If a bit of the spirit of good class advertising can be infused here, it will not be amiss. To describe the object summarily and yet clearly and interestingly, so as to make its exhibition seem worth while to the visitor, that is the function of the label. As with food, so with such exhibits: not what is offered counts, but what is digested. Moreover, what is served should be made palatable.

All this is educational in effect, and that brings the thought of educational effort directed at the child. Mr. Kent, in his article in the *Educational Review* of January, 1910, clearly emphasized the necessity of co-operation between art museums and schools, and the matter has of course been discussed elsewhere, as in the *Burlington Magazine* of March, 1907. It is the effort to increase the educational influence of our museums



EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY AMERICAN ARTISTS. PUBLIC LIBRARY. FORT WORTH, TEXAS

which particularly impressed Hoofstede de Groot when he visited this country in 1908.

Direct work with the primary and secondary schools, as we see it in New York and other cities, can be carried out to some extent in connection with the smallest collection. Here, again, the co-operation of the local library is an important factor.

Finally, there is the traveling exhibit to add variety. There may be an extension of this plan, served by central agencies sending out shows on a circuit, and by an inter-loan system between museums both large and small.\*

Reference to the literature (especially the more popular) of the exhibited objects might well accompany such circulating displays, to be checked up in each local museum library or public library. Thus, again, the educational possibilities of the exhibit would be increased by its association with the library, and the latter might gain in increased use. Loans from private collections also obviously suggest themselves.

The modern spirit in museum manage-

ment considers the value of the institution to the city, as Mr. Griffith, for instance, has pointed out. (*The Burlington Magazine* once deplored the fact that the directors of so few English provincial museums seemed to ask themselves "How can our gallery be made of the greatest possible use to our city?) One suggestion made for the smaller cities in *The Century* of August, 1910, is to enlist the aid of women's clubs in the founding of museums.

Much of what I have said represents well-known methods of operation. The little remaining may be familiar enough and may have already proven impracticable. I do not presume to think that in any of these few general remarks I have gone beyond the pale of truism, yet the obvious is not invariably the most apparent, and there is always the bare possibility of usefulness in the grouping of related facts or ideas. Beyond that, being offered by one far, indeed, from the scene of action, they serve solely to emphasize the ever-present need of adjustment of point of view to conditions.

## ART MUSEUMS AS WORKING CENTERS

BY ANNA SEATON-SCHMIDT

THE Pennsylvania Museum of Industrial Arts is a splendid example of what can be accomplished by a working museum. The purpose of this institution has always been distinctly industrial, its founders being determined to make the collections largely illustrative of the application of art to commercial industries. Machinery is used wherever it can aid the designer in his weaving, knitting or iron work. Teachers and pupils are constantly studying the museum handicrafts, believing that man has created nothing in the past that should not be equaled

in the present. Already their textile school is world renowned and it is hoped that in the near future it may produce such exquisite fabrics as to remove all danger of French competition. Undoubtedly, up to the present, France has been able to manufacture textiles which have surpassed all others in their esthetic qualities, just as she has led the world in her fine arts.

The esthetic taste of her people was developed through her working museums or cathedrals—for the churches of France have been the great work-shops

\*The *Evening Post*, of New York, in an editorial of February 11, 1905, on "Circulating Museums," touched on this matter, referring also to the fact that in France and Germany the provincial museums receive surplus stock from the large central ones.